

Statement by Jamie Dantzcher to the United States Senate Commerce Committee, April 18, 2018

Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Blumenthal, distinguished members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today.

One year ago, I testified in front the US Senate Judiciary Committee in support of legislation by to protect child athletes from sexual abuse in gymnastics and other Olympic sports. That legislation is now law and I want to thank all of the members of Congress in both parties who voted for it.

I was the first Olympic athlete to come forward publicly and reveal Nassar's long history of abuse and sadly, I was not the last. We now know that 4 of the 2012 "Fierce Five" gold medal gymnasts are Nassar survivors including my sister survivor Jordyn Wieber.

I let the world know that the former Olympic Team doctor Nassar abused me at the USA National Training Center in Texas, he abused me in California and during gymnastics competitions all over the world. Worst of all, he abused me in my hotel room in Sydney at the Olympic Games.

I now understand that through all of that time USA Gymnastics had policies that prohibited adults from being alone in hotel rooms with children but they didn't enforce the policies.

I knew at the time that speaking out would not be easy or painless. Back in 2000, as a teenager I had the audacity to speak out against the abusive training methods employed by Bela and Marta Karolyi and suffered criticism from USAG staff, coaches and the media.

I believed that speaking out was my right. I believed that this abuse was allowed to happen because many adults at USA Gymnastics, the United States Olympic Committee, Michigan State University and in various gyms throughout the country kept Larry Nassar's secret. They failed to speak up and let Nassar assault children.

I have numerous nieces and nephews. I could not look at them any longer and stay quiet. I knew as a former Olympian that if I spoke people might be more likely to speak up. As it turned out. I was right.

In the summer of 2016 I began to understand that Larry Nassar had sexually abused me and his procedures were not legitimate medical treatment. I further came to learn that he had been quietly dismissed by USA Gymnastics based upon allegations that he had sexually abused minors on our Olympic and National Women's Gymnastics Teams. His firing was kept quiet by USA Gymnastics and he was allowed to post messages on social media that said he had "retired".

I decided to seek justice, not just for myself but to protect others. Initially I filed a lawsuit as a Jane Doe but I did give an interview to the Indianapolis Star when my case was filed. Almost immediately after filing, I was bullied on social media. My name was put on various social media sites by Nassar supporters who were either told or figured out my identity.

A senior USAG officials actually sent me a Facebook petition she was circulating to support Larry Nassar. Others attacked me personally, questioning my motives, my character, my morals and even my sanity.

Attorneys working for USA Gymnastics called former boyfriends and tried to dig up dirt on me, asking very personal and detailed questions about my sex life. They blamed my parents and generally attacked my character. This upset me greatly. I had done nothing wrong except speak the truth about what happened to me as a little girl. Their response was to blame the victim.

USA Gymnastics put out an immediate statement about my lawsuit. They said they found out about Dr. Nassar's misconduct in 2015 and "immediately" contacted law enforcement. A few months later we found out that was a lie. USA Gymnastics has now admitted that they waited more than five weeks before contacting the FBI...and the FBI waited a year before contacting any of the survivors or their families.

During that time, Larry Nassar went back to his clinic at MSU and continued to molest children.

I began to learn that I was not alone. Almost immediately other girls and women began to come forward with stories disturbingly similar to mine. I learned through the media that there were dozens if not hundreds of victims. Today more than 250 women have already come forward in court and to law enforcement. All have told stories that are disturbingly similar to mine.

Larry Nassar was convicted criminally, first for on federal charges for child pornography, then on state charges for criminal sexual conduct. He has been sentenced to 300 years in prison.

USA Gymnastics has also been to court, attempting to dismiss claims by more than 200 women by contending that they had no legal duty to prevent Nassar's abuse or tell us that he was an abuser.

I sat through the depositions of former USA Gymnastics Chairman Paul Parrilla and former President Steve Penny. I was stunned by the way their lawyers fought to prevent them from answering any meaningful questions about what they knew and when they knew it. I was disgusted by their answers when they did answer questions. Their answers were either misleading or attempted to justify their misconduct. I urge the Committee to read these depositions and question Mr. Parrilla and Mr. Penny under oath. Maybe they will answer tough questions and tell you the truth. I hope they do.

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This is a case of powerful people protecting other powerful people. It is up to you, as powerful members of the United States Senate to hold them accountable and I believe you will.

Thank you for listening to all of us.

